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WASHINGTON POST
1 June 1984

Pastora a Political Problem for Many

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Washington Post Foreign Service

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, May 31—Eden Pastora, the apparent target of last night's deadly blast near the Nicaraguan-Costa Rican border, has long been a political problem for most major actors in the Nicaraguan guerrilla conflict, from his former Sandinista colleagues now ruling Nicaragua to the CIA and the anti-Sandinista rebels it backs.

While no evidence has surfaced to indicate responsibility for the attack on the mercurial guerrilla leader, fingers already have begun pointing in every direction.

In initial reactions to reports of the bombing, Costa Rican officials said they believed the Sandinistas were responsible. At the same time, officials of the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance, Pastora's anti-Sandinista rebel group, accused the CIA. By this afternoon, all sides were restricting themselves to saying they had no definitive information and were investigating the incident.

Pastora, known as Commander Zero since his days as a hero of the revolt against Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, has been the key obstacle in recent CIA-sponsored efforts to draw together the several anti-Sandinista guerrilla groups, generating resentment both in Washington and among the rebels, including many within his own organization.

In addition, the Sandinistas have particular reason to take offense at Pastora's attacks on their government. He was one of their own—and one of the best liked—until he left the country in 1981. He later formed his rebel group, charging that the Sandinistas had betrayed the revolution by forming too close an alliance with Cuba and the Soviets.

Against that background, the lineup of those who could benefit from Pastora's assassination includes all organizations involved in the U.S.-financed campaign of irregular warfare against the Marxist-led Sandinista government as well as the Sandinistas themselves. Among them:

- The Sandinista government. Pas-

...ora was a major figure in the rebellion that overthrew Somoza in 1979 and served for a time as deputy interior minister and deputy defense minister. In that light, the Sandinista leadership finds Pastora a particularly irritating one because he cannot be tarred with the brush of Somoza's hated National Guard, a favorite Sandinista propaganda weapon against the larger Nicaraguan Democratic Force guerrillas based in Honduras and known as the FDN.

[A spokesman for the Nicaraguan Embassy in Washington said, "We had no involvement in it." In Managua, Vice Foreign Minister Jose Leon Talavera said the bombing seems to reflect an internal struggle between the counterrevolutionary groups And it is possible that the FDN, together with the CIA—that is, if the CIA regarded Pastora as an obstacle—could have had something to do with it.]

- The CIA. According to reports in Costa Rica and Washington, Pastora has been resisting U.S. efforts to promote unity between his Costa Rica-based Revolutionary Democratic Alliance and the Honduras-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force.

Unity could present the U.S. Congress and public with an improved image of the fight against Nicaragua's revolutionary government, increasing the likelihood of continued funding for the rebels, and could improve military efficiency.

Beyond that, Pastora has resisted CIA control since the beginning of his military campaign.

In recent months, Pastora was quoted in news agency interviews as saying he had sent his family out of Costa Rica to Panama because he feared harm from the CIA or its Central American allies.

[CIA spokesman George Lauder said reports that the agency was responsible for the blast were "ridiculous propaganda," adding that it is "forbidden from engaging in assassinations." He declined to comment on reports that the CIA was pressuring Pastora to join forces with other rebel groups.

[Secretary of State George P. Shultz, en route to El Salvador, said charges of CIA involvement in the attack on Pastora were "absolute nonsense." He said it was "easy to speculate about the desire of those who oppose (Pastora) to get rid of him," but added, "I don't think it was any of the other contras." Asked if that meant he thought the Sandinista government was responsible, Shultz said, "I wouldn't want to make that statement on an on-the-record basis," Washington Post staff writer Joanne Omang reported.]

- The Nicaraguan Democratic Force. The Tegucigalpa-based rebel force with more than 10,000 men, allied with the Indian group Misura, has long regarded Pastora as an adventurer whose flair for publicity makes him seem more important than he really is.

"Pastora has no real military experience," said a leader of the force.

At the same time, Pastora's stated goals for a nonaligned Nicaragua, without Cuban or U.S. influence, is in conflict with those of many within the force's leadership.

- The Revolutionary Democratic Alliance. Pastora's own group has voted at least twice to join a unified command with the Nicaraguan Democratic Force leadership. But Pastora and his half dozen closest followers have refused to go along, producing a split in the ARDE coalition of several anti-Sandinista groups.

In the latest Revolutionary Democratic Alliance meeting earlier this week, anti-Sandinista sources said, 17 officials voiced approval of the unity plan and 10 backed Pastora in his refusal.

Still in question is how many of ARDE's 2,000 to 4,000 fighters would refuse to recognize the coalition.